

What is fluency?

Fluency is the ability to read rapidly and accurately, with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression. Fluency includes the ability to decode rapidly, grouping words into meaningful units for interpretation. Fluency includes pronunciation, determination of emphasis, and appropriate pauses to make sense of text. Fluency is a means readers use to comprehend.

Why should fluency be taught?

- Readers face two major cognitive demands: decoding (recognizing words) and comprehending. Since cognitive resources to meet these demands are limited, resources expended on word recognition reduce the resources available for comprehension. Skilled readers recognize words with automaticity, freeing resources to group words into meaningful units (phrasing), attend to punctuation, and ultimately gain meaning from text. Poor readers use time and resources to decode; their choppy and inaccurate reading impedes comprehension.
- Fluency is an issue for adult beginning readers, intermediate, and perhaps advanced readers. There are large differences between adults with good and poor reading fluency, and adult beginning readers' fluency is similar to the fluency of children who are beginning readers. (Kruidenier, 2002)
- Fluency may be taught to ABE students, and fluency practice may lead to increases in reading achievement. (Kruidenier, 2002)

Evidence-Based Practices for Instruction: ADULTS (Kruidinier, 2002)

- Assess fluency to determine whether fluency instruction is needed. For lower-level readers, one way to determine fluency is by measuring accuracy of decoding and rate of oral reading.
- Use approaches that include repeated reading of passages of text, words from texts, and other text units. Some examples of repeated reading approaches include:
 - Listening to taped versions of passages
 - Simultaneously reading passages aloud while using typed transcripts
 - Giving students passages that are one grade level above their grade equivalent scores on a test of reading comprehension ability
 - Re-reading a passage while listening until students feel able to read it aloud on their own to the instructor
 - Reading two passages with 90% accuracy (mispronouncing no more than 10% of words in a passage) before moving on the next grade level.
- Use systematic phonics instruction to improve fluency.

Evidence-Based Practices for Instruction: CHILDREN (NRP, 2000)

- Provide opportunities for readers to read passages orally multiple times with guidance and feedback from teachers, peers, or parents. The following practices seem to offer effective repeated reading experiences:
 - Paired reading
 - Shared reading
 - Collaborative oral reading
 - Echo reading
 - Tape-assisted or computer-assisted oral reading

Sources

Kruidenier, John (2002). *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy, Partnership for Reading.

National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching Children to Read: an Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction (Report of the Subgroups)*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Child Health and Human Development.